

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2277

INFO AMEMBASSY PORT

AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 3735

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JM

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER MANLEY ON JAMAICAN POLITICAL SCENE

1. DURING MY CALL ON PRIME MINISTER MANLEY ON MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 3, CONVERSATION OPENED WITH HIS QUERY RE RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN UNITED STATES. WHEN THIS LED US TO DISCUSSION OF RESULTS OF RECENT POLLS, I USED OPPORTUNITY TO ASK HIS IMPRESSION OF "STRAW POLLS" WHICH PRESENTLY APPEARING IN THE DAILY GLEANER AND WHICH SUGGEST THAT PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY HAS NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY AS IT PREPARED FOR ELECTION. (WE PLAN REPORT POLLS, TOGETHER WITH COMMENT, WHEN THEY ARE ALL PUBLISHED.) MANLEY STATED THAT AS IN CASE AMERICAN POLLS, NUMBER OF "UNDECIDED" RESPONDENTS TO GLEANER POLL OF PARTICULAR INTEREST; THESE SUGGEST THAT THERE WILL BE A LARGE SWING VOTE HERE IN JAMAICA WHEN ACTUAL VOTING OCCURS. PRIME MINISTER ADDED THAT GLEANER POLL COINCIDES CLOSELY WITH PNP'S ASSESSMENT, BUT ADDED -- IN BURST OF CANDOR -- THAT PNP'S POLL SHOWED EVEN LARGER NUMBER OF "UNDECIDED" RESPONDENTS. QUICKLY ADDING A NOTE OF CONFIDENCE, HE EXPRESSED VIEW
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THAT PNP WAS GAINING AND IS, NOW IN FACT, STRONGER THAN THE POLLS

SUGGEST. THIS RESULTS FROM RECENT DECLINE IN VIOLENCE.

2. I THEN ASKED WHETHER STATE OF EMERGENCY WILL BE CONTINUED THROUGH THE ELECTIONS. THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED THAT IT MUCH TOO EARLY TO SAY. HOWEVER, HE HAS NO DOUBT THAT SOE IS WORKING, MAINLY BECAUSE 170 OF THE ISLAND'S MOST VIOLENT GUNMEN (INCLUDING PNP GUNMEN "WHO HAD BEEN ENGAGING IN EXTRACURRICULA ACTIVITIES") HAD BEEN LOCKED UP. HE ADDED THAT HE COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT RELEASE THESE CRIMINALS. (COMMENT: 184 TOTAL NOW UNDER SOE DETENTION.) HE ALSO SAID STATE OF EMERGENCY IS COMPATIBLE WITH FREE ELECTIONS, AS EVIDENCED BY OPPOSITION'S MANY SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL RALLIES.
GERARD

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